

TRACKING ELEPHANTS FROM SPACE

Project:
*Cameroon Elephant
Tracking and Conservation*



Location:
Cameroon,
West Africa

Project Leader:
Dr. Mike Loomis,
Chief Veterinarian, North Carolina Zoo

Partners:
 World Wildlife Fund, Cameroon

 Cameroon Ministry of Forests
and Wildlife

Endangered Elephants

Elephant populations across Africa are increasingly threatened by indirect and direct conflicts with humans. As human populations



*Elephants are the
largest land animals
in the world.*

grow they convert elephant habitat into farm land, leaving elephants with less and less suitable area in which to live. Expanding farms also bring people and elephants into more frequent contact. This is dangerous for elephants and people.

Elephants are often killed after eating people's crops, and people can be injured when they encounter wild elephants. Elephants are also hunted for their meat and ivory.

Using Satellites to Track Elephants

The North Carolina Zoo has been involved with the conservation of wild elephants in Africa for over ten years. The Zoo's Chief Veterinarian, Dr. Mike Loomis, works to conserve populations of elephants dwelling in both the forests and savannas of Cameroon, one of the most biodiverse countries in Africa. Dr. Loomis' project, conducted in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), uses sophisticated satellite tracking technology to monitor the movements of elephants at several sites across Cameroon.

By placing satellite tracking collars on the elephants, Dr. Loomis and his team can identify habitat that is important for elephants, and use this information for better management of protected areas. The elephant tracking program also allows conservationists to follow migrating elephants and to intervene before they reach farm lands, preventing conflict between people and elephants.

New Sites, New Elephants

2009-2010 was a challenging time for the elephant tracking project. Over the last two years the team has begun working at several new sites in Cameroon that are very important for conservation. While Korup National Park and the Dja Biosphere Reserve are key conservation areas, they have proven tough for collaring elephants. As a result, during 2009 and 2010, Mike and his team were



Dr. Loomis works with the field team to place a tracking collar on an elephant in Cameroon.